

Sample Snack Menus for CACFP Child Care Centers and Homes

This document provides guidance and sample snack menus for ages 3-5 in child care centers, emergency shelters, at-risk afterschool care centers, and family day care homes that participate in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) CACFP. The specified servings meet or exceed the requirements of the [CACFP Meal Patterns for Children](#) and are indicated in parentheses after each menu item. Servings may be adjusted for other ages.

The CACFP snack meal pattern for ages 3-5 requires any two of the five components: $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of unflavored low-fat (1%) or unflavored fat-free milk; $\frac{1}{2}$ ounce of meat/meat alternates; $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of vegetables; $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of fruits; and $\frac{1}{2}$ ounce equivalent (oz eq) of grains. Only one of the two snack components may be a creditable beverage such as milk or juice.

Each component must provide at least the minimum serving in the CACFP meal pattern. Snack menus may include additional foods or larger servings beyond the minimum requirements. Serve nutrient-dense foods that are appropriate to the nutrition needs of each age group.



For detailed guidance on the CACFP meal patterns for children, refer to the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) guide, [Meal Pattern Requirements for CACFP Child Care Programs](#). For additional resources, refer to the CSDE's [Resources for the CACFP Meal Patterns](#) and visit the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage.

Children younger than 4 are at the highest risk of choking. Consider children's age and developmental readiness when deciding what foods to offer in CACFP menus. Modify menus as appropriate and use preparation techniques to reduce the risk of choking. For additional guidance, visit the "[Choking Prevention](#)" section of the CSDE's [Food Safety for Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Menu Planning Considerations for Snack

Consider the meal pattern requirements and recommendations below when planning snack menus. For detailed guidance on crediting foods, refer to the CSDE's [Crediting Summary Charts for the CACFP Meal Patterns for Children](#) and visit the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage.

- **Meat/meat alternates:** The serving refers to the edible portion of cooked lean meat, poultry, or fish as served, e.g., cooked lean meat without bone, breading, binders, extenders, or other ingredients. Nut and seed butters credit by volume (tablespoons) not weight. Yogurt cannot exceed 23 grams of total sugars per 6 ounces (3.83 grams per ounce). Commercial meat products with binders and extenders (such as deli meats, hot dogs, and sausage) and commercial combination foods (such as pizza and chicken nuggets) require a Child Nutrition (CN) label or product formulation

Sample Snack Menus for CACFP Child Care Centers and Homes

statement (PFS) to determine crediting information. For more information on crediting meat/meat alternates, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Crediting Deli Meats in the CACFP](#) and [Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the CACFP](#), and visit the "Meat/Meat Alternates Component" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage. The USDA's [CACFP Best Practices](#) recommends serving only lean meats, nuts, and legumes; limiting processed meats to one serving per week; and serving only low-fat or reduced-fat natural cheese.

- **Fruits and vegetables:** Before planning juice at snack, check that the other meals and snacks that same day do not include juice. Pasteurized full-strength juice (including fruit and vegetable juice, frozen pops made from 100 percent juice, pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies, and juice from canned fruit in 100 percent juice) credits as either the vegetables component or fruits component at only one meal or snack per day. The USDA's [CACFP Best Practices](#) recommends serving a vegetable or fruit for at least one of the two required snack components. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Crediting Juice in the CACFP](#) and [Crediting Smoothies in the CACFP](#). Dried fruits credit as twice the volume served, e.g., ¼ cup of raisins credits as ½ cup of the fruits component. Raw leafy greens such as lettuce or spinach credit as half the volume served, e.g., ½ cup of raw leafy greens credits as ¼ cup of the vegetables component. For more information on crediting fruits and vegetables, visit the "Fruits Component" section and the "Vegetables Component" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage.
- **Grains:** Grains must be whole grain, enriched, bran, or germ. At least one serving of grains per day must be whole-grain rich (WGR). The USDA's [CACFP Best Practices](#) recommends at least two servings of WGR grains per day. Cooked and ready-to-eat (RTE) breakfast cereals cannot exceed 6 grams of sugars per dry ounce. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resources, [How to Identify Creditable Grains in the CACFP](#), [Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the CACFP](#), [Crediting Whole Grains in the CACFP](#), [Crediting Enriched Grains in the CACFP](#) and [Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the CACFP](#). Grains must meet the required weights (groups A-E) or volumes (groups H-I) in [Grain Ounce Equivalents for the CACFP](#) or provide the minimum creditable grains per serving. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Calculation Methods for Grain Ounce Equivalents in the CACFP](#). Grain-based desserts (such as cookies, doughnuts, cereal bars, granola bars, pastries, cake, and brownies) do not credit. The CSDE recommends limiting sweet crackers (graham crackers and animal crackers) to no more than twice per week between all meals and snacks. For more information, visit the USDA's webpage, [Grain-based Desserts in the CACFP](#). For more information on crediting grains, visit the "Grains Component" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage.
- **Noncreditable foods:** Noncreditable foods cannot be served in place of the required components. Examples of noncreditable foods include potato chips, pudding, ice cream, gelatin, cream cheese, bacon, condiments (e.g., syrup, jam, ketchup, mustard, mayonnaise, and butter), and water. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Noncreditable Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs](#).
- **Water:** The USDA recommends serving water when snacks do not include milk or juice. Water does not credit in the CACFP meal patterns and cannot be offered in place of the required food components. For more information, visit the "Water Availability" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage.

Sample Snack Menus for CACFP Child Care Centers and Homes

Crediting Documentation

CACFP facilities must be able to document that menus provide the required food components and quantities. Use the USDA's [Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#) (FBG) to determine the amount of purchased food that meets the required serving for each meal pattern component. Commercial processed foods not listed in the FBG require a Child Nutrition (CN) label or PFS to document crediting information. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Using Child Nutrition \(CN\) Labels in the CACFP](#), [Using Product Formulation Statements in the CACFP](#), and [Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the CACFP](#), and visit the "Crediting Commercial Processed Products" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage.

Foods made from scratch must have a recipe that documents the crediting information per serving. For more information, visit the "Crediting Foods Prepared on Site" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage.

Abbreviations for Sample Menus

M = Milk component

MMA = Meat/meat alternates

V = Vegetables component

F = Fruits component

G = Grains component

WGR = Whole grain-rich

Not credited

A = Additional creditable food (not full serving)

O = Other food (noncreditable)

c = cup

Tbsp = tablespoon

tsp = teaspoon

oz = ounce

oz eq = ounce equivalent

Note: The CSDE's sample menus are intended for informational purposes and do not guarantee compliance with the CACFP meal patterns for children. Crediting information for local menus will vary depending on the types of foods purchased by the CACFP facility, and the recipes and preparation techniques used. CACFP facilities are responsible for ensuring that their menus meet the CACFP meal patterns for children and maintaining appropriate crediting documentation on file (refer to "[Crediting Documentation](#)" above).

Sample Snack Menus for CACFP Child Care Centers and Homes

		Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Week 1	M ½ cup					
	MMA ½ oz		Yogurt and fruit parfait: Low-fat vanilla yogurt (¼ c)			Ham (¼ oz) and cheese (¼ oz) roll-up
	V ½ cup			Cucumber slices (½ c)	Vegetable soup (½ cup vegetables)	
	F ½ cup	Orange slices (½ c)	Sliced strawberries (¼ c) Blueberries (¼ c)		Cantaloupe chunks (½ c)	
	G ½ oz eq	Enriched corn muffin (1 oz)		Whole-grain crackers (½ oz) WGR		Whole-corn tortilla (½ oz) WGR
	A		Whole-grain granola (2 Tbsp) WGR			Shredded lettuce (⅛ c)
	O	Water	Water	Low-fat dip (1 Tbsp) Water	Water	Mustard (1 tsp) or low-fat mayonnaise (1 tsp) Water
Week 2	M ½ cup					
	MMA ½ oz	Diced turkey (½ oz)		Sunflower butter (1 Tbsp)	Hummus (⅛ c chickpeas) pita with shredded carrots	
	V ½ cup	Tossed salad: Lettuce (½ c) with tomatoes and cucumbers (¼ c)	Sliced avocado (½ c)			Cucumber slices (¼ c) Carrot slices (¼ c)
	F ½ cup			Apple slices (½ c)		
	G ½ oz eq		Whole-wheat toast (½ oz) WGR		Whole-wheat pita half (½ oz) WGR	Enriched pretzels (½ oz)
	A	Enriched croutons (¼ oz)			Shredded carrots (⅛ c)	
	O	Low-fat dressing (1 Tbsp) Water	Water	Water	Water	Low-fat dip (1 Tbsp) Water

Sample Snack Menus for CACFP Child Care Centers and Homes

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Week 3	M ½ cup				Unflavored low-fat milk (½ c)	
	MMA ½ oz		Low-fat cottage cheese (⅛ c)	Tortilla wrap: Refried beans (⅛ c) and shredded cheese (⅛ oz)		
	V ½ cup				Carrot-pineapple-raisin salad: Shredded carrots (½ c)	Roasted cauliflower bites (½ c)
	F ½ cup	Mixed berries (½ c)	Canned apricots in juice (½ c)			Honeydew melon (½ c)
	G ½ oz eq	Soft whole-grain pretzel (½ oz) WGR		Whole-grain tortilla (½ oz) WGR		
	A	Shredded cheese (¼ oz)		Diced tomato (⅛ c)	Crushed pineapple (⅛ cup) Raisins (1 tsp)	
	O	Water	Water	Water		Low-fat dip (1 oz) Water
Week 4	M ½ cup			Unflavored low-fat milk (½ c)		
	MMA ½ oz	Part-skim Mozzarella cheese stick (½ oz)	Ants on a log: Peanut butter (1 Tbsp)		Pasta veggie salad: Ham (½ oz)	
	V ½ cup		Carrot sticks (¼ c) Celery sticks (¼ c)			
	F ½ cup	Red grapes (½ c)				Sliced kiwi (½ c)
	G ½ oz eq			Whole-grain flaked cereal (½ c) WGR	Enriched rotini pasta (¼ c)	Whole-grain cornbread (1 oz) WGR
	A		Raisins (1 Tbsp)		Diced vegetables: Carrots, broccoli, and tomatoes (¼ c)	
	O	Low-fat dressing (1 Tbsp) Water	Water	Water	Water	Water

Sample Snack Menus for CACFP Child Care Centers and Homes

		Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Week 5	M ½ cup					
	MMA ½ oz	Low-fat cottage cheese (⅛ c)	Peanut butter (1 Tbsp)		Fruit and yogurt smoothie: Yogurt (¼ c)	
	V ½ cup		Carrot sticks (½ c)			
	F ½ cup			Diced papaya (½ c)	Pureed strawberries (½ c)	Sliced green grapes (½ c)
	G ½ oz eq	Whole-grain puffed cereal (¾ c) WGR		Trail mix: Whole-grain cereal rounds (¼ c) WGR , enriched pretzels (¼ oz), and dried fruit		Enriched pretzel sticks (½ oz)
	A	Crushed pineapple in juice (1 Tbsp)		Peanuts (½ Tbsp) Dried fruit (½ Tbsp)		
	O	Water	Water	Water		Water
Week 6	M ½ cup				Unflavored low-fat milk (½ c)	
	MMA ½ oz			Low-fat Greek yogurt (¼ c)	Almond butter (1 Tbsp)	Tuna salad (½ oz tuna) ⁴
	V ½ cup	Sliced jicama (½ c)	Marinated broccoli florets (½ c)			
	F ½ cup		Plums (½ c)	Fruit salad: Oranges, bananas, sliced grapes, pineapple (½ c)		
	G ½ oz eq	Enriched bread sticks (½ oz)			Whole-wheat bagel (½ oz) WGR	Whole-grain crackers (½ oz) WGR
	A					Chopped tomatoes (¼ c)
	O	Low-fat dip (2 Tbsp) Water	Water	Water		Water

Sample Snack Menus for CACFP Child Care Centers and Homes

		Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Week 7	M ½ cup			Unflavored low-fat milk (½ c)		
	MMA ½ oz	Pumpkin seeds (½ oz)	Hummus (⅛ c chickpeas)		Shredded low-fat cheese (½ oz)	Berry-peach yogurt parfait: Low-fat yogurt (¼ c)
	V ½ cup		Zucchini sticks (¼ c) Pepper strips (¼ c)		Garden salad: Lettuce (½ c), tomatoes, cucumbers, and carrots (¼ c)	
	F ½ cup	Watermelon chunks (½ c)				Seasonal berries (¼ c) Diced peaches (¼ c)
	G ½ oz eq			Enriched pumpkin cranberry muffin (1 oz) WGR		
	A					
	O	Water	Water		Low-fat Italian dressing (1 Tbsp) Water	Crumbled graham crackers (1 Tbsp) Water
Week 8	M ½ cup					
	MMA ½ oz	Pita bread triangles: Low-fat cheese (½ oz)				Chicken salad (½ oz cooked chicken)
	V ½ cup		Roasted chickpeas (½ c)	Marinated diced cucumber- tomato salad (½ c)		
	F ½ cup		Pineapple chunks (½ c)		Strawberry shortcake: Sliced strawberries (½ c)	
	G ½ oz eq	Whole-wheat pita bread (½ oz) WGR		Whole-grain roll (½ oz) WGR	Enriched biscuit (½ oz)	Whole-wheat pita pocket (½ oz) WGR
	A	Veggie salsa (⅛ c)				Shredded lettuce (⅛ c) ⁵ Diced tomato (⅛ c)
	O	Low-fat dip (2 Tbsp) Water	Water	Water	Whipped cream (2 Tbsp) Water	Water

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		Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Week 9	M ½ cup					
	MMA ½ oz				Almond butter (1 Tbsp)	Herbed cottage cheese (⅛ c)
	V ½ cup		Marinated three-bean salad (½ c)			Celery sticks and cucumber slices (½ c)
	F ½ cup	Pineapple slices (½ c)		Sliced kiwi (½ c)	Frozen banana (½ c)	
	G ½ oz eq	Whole-grain bagel (½ oz) WGR	Enriched pretzels (½ oz)	Whole-grain puffed cereal (¾ c) WGR		
	A					Whole-grain crackers (¼ oz) WGR
	O	Light cream cheese (½ Tbsp) Water	Water	Water		Water
Week 10	M ½ cup					
	MMA ½ oz	Hard-boiled egg (½ large)				Peanut butter (1 Tbsp)
	V ½ cup		Sliced cherry tomatoes (½ c)		Roasted green beans (½ c)	
	F ½ cup		Diced pears (½ c)	Refried beans and salsa (½ cup)	Apple slices (½ c)	
	G ½ oz eq	Whole-grain roll (½ oz) WGR		Whole-corn tortilla chips (½ oz) WGR		Whole-wheat bagel (½ oz) WGR
	A					
	O	Low-fat dip (2 Tbsp) Water	Water	Water		Water

Sample Snack Menus for CACFP Child Care Centers and Homes

Resources

Bite Size: Meeting the CACFP Meal Patterns for Children (CSDE's training program for child care facilities):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-CACFP-Child-Care-Programs/Related-Resources#BiteSize>

CACFP Meal Patterns for Children (CSDE):
<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/MealPattern/CACFPMealPattern.pdf>

Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs (CSDE webpage):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Crediting-Foods-in-CACFP-Child-Care-Programs>

Crediting Summary Charts for the CACFP Meal Patterns for Children (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/Crediting/Crediting_Summary_Charts_CACFP.pdf

Cycle Menus for Child Care: Preschoolers (Institute of Child Nutrition):
<https://theicn.org/resources/1575/cycle-menus-for-child-care-preschoolers/118740/cycle-menus-for-child-care-preschoolers.pdf>

Meal Pattern Requirements for CACFP Child Care Programs (CSDE):
<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/MealPattern/GuideCACFPMealPatterns.pdf>

Meal Patterns for CACFP Child Care Programs (CSDE webpage):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-CACFP-Child-Care-Programs>

Menu Planning Basics: A Guide for CACFP Operators in Child Care (Institute of Child Nutrition):
<https://theicn.org/icn-resources-a-z/menu-planning-basics-cacfp>

Menu Planning for CACFP Child Care Programs (CSDE webpage):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-CACFP-Child-Care-Programs/Related-Resources#MenuPlanning>

Recipes for Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE's Meal Patterns for CACFP Child Care Programs webpage):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Menu-Planning#Recipes>

Resource List for Menu Planning and Food Production for Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/Resources/ResourcesMenuPlanning.pdf>

Resources for the CACFP Meal Patterns (CSDE):
<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/MealPattern/ResourcesCACFPMealPattern.pdf>

Serving Snacks in the CACFP (USDA):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/serving-snacks-cacfp>

Snack Inspiration (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction):
https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/community-nutrition/pdf/snack_inspiration.pdf

Sample Snack Menus for CACFP Child Care Centers and Homes



For more information on the CACFP meal patterns, refer to the CSDE's guide, *Meal Pattern Requirements for CACFP Child Care Programs*, and visit the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for CACFP Child Care Programs](#) and [Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpages, or contact the [CACFP staff](#) in the CSDE's Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 504, Hartford, CT 06103-1841.

This document is available at <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/MealPattern/MenuSnackCACFP.pdf>.

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Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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